

critical digest

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Mar 27, 1961 Vol XIII No 1 The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter Digest Service-Published 52 weeks a year-\$25 per year -

This Week in NYC

Two way communication between Broadway professional theatre and community and college theatre was established by the creation of "Theatre Communications Group" by four year Ford Foundation grant of \$244,000. Pat Brown, former producer of Magnolia Theatre, Long Beach, Calif will be field director with offices at Carnegie Inst of Tech, Pittsburgh. Executive directors are Theodore Hoffman, John Reich, Nina Vance, NY advisory members include Roger Stevens, Nan Martin, Geraldine Page. First year's budget will be \$44,000 and functions will include --- data on theatre career planning, annual auditions of university and community theatre talent for pros, means for community theatres to come under Equity, professional apprenticeships for students, etc.

Plays

Shows that closed include -- Becket after 186 performances and Gypsy after 696. 13 Daughters folded after 28 at estimated loss of \$375,000 ... Toys in the Attic to close Apr 8 after 464 performances, The Music Man Apr 15 after 1876... Bill Penn assisting director Cyril Ritchard, The Happiest Girl in the World.

Broadway Business

Variety grosses still down with only Mary, Mary reporting a sell-out. Nine shows on twofers.

Players

John Cullum subbed for several days for ill Richard Burton, Camelot... Ann Summers replaced Nan Martin, Under the Yum Yum Tree ... Audrey Christie to sub for two weeks for Pert Kelton, Come Blow Your Horn, who will repeat original role in "The Music Man" film ... Charles Nelson Reilly subbed last week for Paul Lynde, Bye Bye Birdie ... Joe E Brown, Jo Sullivan, Jane Kean to co-star in Show Boat Apr 12 at City Center... Franchot Tone to star in Mandingo due in May ... Gretchen Wyler and Gene Rayburn replace Chita Rivera and Dick Van Dyke in Bye Bye Birdie Apr 8.

NYC Calendar

What a Killing-Folksbiene (175 E Bway) 3/27. Jack Collins presents new musical about 1920 Chicago gangsters with book by Fred Hebert, music by George Harwell, lyrics by Joan Anania & Harwell, staged by Gene Montefiore, choreography by Bob Hamilton, with Paul Hartman, Judy Lynn, Karen Chandler.

A Far Country-Music Box- 3/28. Roger L. Stevens-Joel Schenker present new drama on Sigmund Freud by Henry Denker, directed by Alfred Ryder with Kim Stanley, Sam Wanamaker, Steven Hill, Lili Darvas.

Under Milk Wood-Circle in Square (159 Bleecker)- 3/29. Circle presents revival of Dylan Thomas play directed by William Ball with Carol Teitel, Robert Gerringer, Dana Elcar, Jenny Egan.

Impulse-Royale 4/1. Alex Cohen-Monte Kay-Andre Goulson present new jazz revue narrated by Brendan Behan, with Nina Simon, Oscar Brown, Jr, Gerry Mulligan and band, Olatunji and dancers, Carmen de Lavallade.

Award Dept

Lee Strasberg, Actors Studio, won 1961 Kelecy Allen Award... 1961 Tony Awards to be voted by 300 members of American Theatre Wing instead of 50 Board members.

Special Events

Electra workshop production of Institute of Advanced Studies in Theatre Arts, directed by Dimitri Rondiris gives its final performances on Mar 27 6 and 9 PM, Mar 28 3 and 6 PM ... Pirandello's Giants of the Mountain to be given first US presentation by Pirandello Society & Living Theatre Apr 3 & 10 at Living Theatre 8 40 PM... Studio Three to present showcase production of Players on the Beach a new play Sheppard Kerman Apr 13-16 at Masters Theatre, Riverside Drive & 103, staged by Kurt Kasznar.

Off Broadway

Feast of Panthers closed in mid-week after 3 performances ... Hobo musical due Apr 10 at Gate instead of Players... Michael Shillo replaced Bert Thorn, The Magnificent Hugo, now set for Apr 7... Phyllis Bash replaced Doreen Duquan, Double Entry... Clairborne Cary, Dan Meehan, Phil Leeds joined Smiling the Boy Feel Dead musical... Joan Copeland and Sorrell Booke featured in Evening of Chekhov now set for Apr 17 at Key.

The Seven at Dawn a new play by Louis Lippa adapted from "The Seven Who Were Hanged" to be presented Apr 17 at Actors Playhouse, staged by Joe Berah... Genet's The Blacks due Apr 15 directed by Gene Frankel... Gallows Humor, new play by Jack Richardson switched producers from Norman Twain-Helen Kamber to Richard Barr-Clinton Wilder. Due Apr 18 at Gramercy Arts with Julie Bovasso, Gerald Hiken, and Vincent Gardinia... Happy as Larry by Donagh MacDonagh to be revived by Irish Players-Lucille Lortel Apr 19 with Dermot McNamara Helena Carroll featured.

Theatre TV Notes

WNTA(NY) Play of the Week Mar 27 is Cool Wind Over the Living a new first play by Joseph Le Suer... Kicks & Co two hour audition of Oscar Brown, Jr musical rescheduled for Mar 28 on NBC Garroway.

Theatre Book Notes

"An Approach to Hamlet" by L C Knights published by Stanford Univ Press (\$2.75)... Alan Simpson working on twin biography of Samuel Beckett and Brendan Behan due in Dec.

Theatre Record Notes

The Premise revue recorded by Vanguard Records.

Play Diary

Next Week: The Happiest Girl in the World-Beck 4/3 ... Painted Days-T. Marquee 4/6... Magnificent Hugo-Cornelia 4/7.

Hamlet-Phoenix 3/16. 6 pro-and 1 con- Mirror-filed on Phoenix Theatre presentation directed by Stuart Vaughan with Donald Madden, Joyce Ebert, Alexander Scourby, Patricia Falkenhain, John Heffernan. Affirmative majority enjoyed youthful cast members, with slight differences in some minor players, and Vaughan's energetic direction; while the sole negative voter was disappointed with most of the work. Taubman, Times, shared his plaudits with 27 year old Madden and the director, who obtained from his company a semblance of consistency in Shakespearean diction. Kerr, Herald Tribune, approved of "Hamlet" for the young in heart. Davis, News, okayed full-blown, vigorous production, a worthwhile venture. Watts, Post, also recommended vigorous, forthright and interesting production, with its frankly sympathetic Hamlet. Post critic did not think performances of Scourby and Falkenhain up to players' best. McClain, Journal American, applauded good, three hour version with rousing performance by Madden in grand tradition, a splendid and inexpensive opportunity to see drama. Aston, World Telegram & Sun, liked this whizzingly exciting production, which he also recommended for all children. Single dissenter Coleman, Mirror, blamed the director for failing to inspire his troupe into giving a striking overall production, his players have varying accents that often are at odds. Madden also is uneven, Mirror man complained moving with grace but with his delivery of some speeches disturbing.

Ladies Night in the Turkish Bath- Gould (169 Allen St) 3/21. 1 pro- Mirror- and 6 cons- filed on revival of 1920 farce hit by Avery Hopwood-Charlton Andrews, adapted by Cyrus Woods. Presented and directed by Harold Lawrence with Lisa Loughlin, June Edwards, John Aniston, Douglas Wilson. Original ran 388 performances in 1920 at Eltinge Theatre, presented by A H Woods with Clairborne Foster. One aisle-sitter okayed the museum piece, while six panned it harshly. Of the cons three admitted leaving after the second act- Post, World Telegram & Sun, Journal American, and only Times mentioned the players the other five ignoring cast names in negative notices. Pro voter Coleman, Mirror, mildly approved it for those willing to settle for passe patter, most of the anatomical variety and bosoms, bosoms and legs by cast eager to please. But Calta, Times, heading on majority panned it as tiresome, old creaky comedy that has some pretty girls and some moments of merriment, but the result being heavy-handed, repetitious and labored. Davis, News, almost gave himself a medal for staying until end of the most severe cornball barrage in recent theatre history. Kerr, Herald Tribune, pummelled the cast as amateurs who forgot that you must be human to be funny. Watts, Post, tabbed it something simply dreadful. Aston, World Telegram & Sun, was only bored by dirty suggestions and efforts to be daring. McClain, Journal American, panned tasteless abomination in which the absence of talent is monumental.

Feast of Panthers-East 74(334 E 74)- 3/20-3/22. 6 con- Times, Herald Tribune, News, Post, World Telegram & Sun, Journal American- and 0 pro- filed on new play by Tom Del Vecchio about Oscar Wilde presented and staged by John Bowman with Claire Luce and J Byron Webster. All blamed author, the AP reporter at Idlewild, NY, for failing to add anything new to Wilde legend, three afternoon paper reviewers-Post, World Telegram & Sun, Journal American-noted that Michael MacLiammoir's one man The Importance of Being Oscar was better done and in much better taste. Esterow, Times, found it interesting at times, but thought too much of it was soap opera. Morgenstern, Herald Tribune, disliked disjointed, distasteful plan, barren of characterization. Davis, News, billed it as more of a case history than a play. Earlier this season play was presented by Idlewild Players at the airport.



THEATRE

BOOK

COMMENTS

"A Victorian in Orbit: The Irreverent Memoirs of Sir Cedric Hardwicke" by Hardwicke and James Brough (Double-day \$4.50) recommended by three reviewers. Aston, World Telegram & Sun, enjoyed volume of reminiscences by an old-timer in the theatre. Coleman, Mirror, approved of lively and illuminating reading, an excellent job of recording the reminiscences and opinions on things theatrical. Millstein, Times, rated it a valuable part of the chronicle of the theatre of the last half century.

"Curtains", selections from drama criticism by Kenneth Tynan (Atheneum \$7.95), proves the author's place as an important critic, comments Harold Clurman, Times Book Review. Tynan that rare phenomenon, a genuine theatre critic, is disposed toward the theatre, he possesses in regard to the theatre something like absolute pitch. Clurman also feels that Tynan has sought and achieved influence on the English theatre.



THEATRE

RECORD

COMMENTS

Jamaica songs on MGM background music albums with David Rose orchestra recommended by Watt, News. "Savannah" can be found on the "Exodus" record, "Take It Slow Joe" on "Cimarron" and "Pretty to Walk With" on "Butterfield 8" record. Harold Arlen songs from the recently neglected but undeniably attractive musical deserve more attention, critic noted.

On the Town revival of original cast (Columbia) with Nancy Walker, Betty Comden, Adolph Green conducted by composer Leonard Bernstein, enjoyed by Wilson, Times, for both the freshness and sparkle of the music and of the lyrics.... Do Re Mi original cast album (RCA) panned by Times record reviewer as hackneyed, contrived and commonplace.



THEATRE

TV

COMMENTS

The Wooden Dish (WNTA Play of the Week) revival of 1955 drama by Edmund Morris with Henry Hull, Martha Scott, George Mathews drew 2 pro and 1 con votes from NY daily TV reviewers. Bakal, Herald Tribune, found play a powerful, sensitive drama embracing a valid theme, well-acted, thoughtful, provocative and interesting. Gardella, News, agreed that thought dull at times it was moving, tender and offered plenty of food for thought. But Shanley, Times, okayed only Hull's performance, while he marked play tearful slice of life in a drab framework.



GREEN
ROOM
DEPARTMENT



PROS & CONS BY TMK

CARIO BAN PANNED... Childish bad manners of the United Arab Republic banning American Theatre Guild Repertory Co Cario performances because troupe also will play in Israel makes Nasser's "culture" a laughingstock, states Times editorial... Despotism and culture are rarely congenial companions, comments Post editorial... It suggests that Nasser's cleverness may be over-rated, adds Watts, Post.

COLUMN TIPS... Pay tv preview of *Gone With the Wind* musical next season expected to gross \$1 million, hears Griffin, Mirror... Edward Mulhare discarded his false beard for *The Devil's Advocate* because some complained it made him too "Christ-like", notes McHarry, News... Yves Montand may star next season in *Hold Back the Dawn* musical version, lists Farrell, World Telegram & Sun.

LIVING THEATRE TOUR... It would be a great pity if the "Living Theatre" cannot raise the \$34,000 required for five week European tour of festivals with *The Connection*, *Many Loves*, *In the Jungle of Cities*, argued Taubman, Times. It is a youthful, talented ensemble which in a few years has created an acting company and a vigorous repertory. Judith Malina- Julian Beck group represents the kind of continuity and coherence of viewpoint that is in such short supply. For the sum involved critic believes it would be hard to imagine livelier value in theatre expeditions.

"LADY" BIRTHDAY... Sixth NY birthday of *My Fair Lady* is also celebrated by long runs in London, Stockholm, Sydney, Amsterdam, reminds Journal American editorial. We need more goodwill ambassadors like Eliza Doolittle and Henry Higgins.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... All the Way Home picked by Watts, Post, as best new American play of the season... Comedie Francaise performance of Robert Hirsch in title role of "Scapin" was the greatest single comic performance in NY in many years, rates Chapman, News... *The Death of Bessie Smith* title of Edward Albee short play strikes Watt, News, as fraudulent and uses the name and memory of the great blues singer in a cheaply sensational fashion.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... Herald Tribune reader would like to exchange Walter Kerr for Jean Kerr as regular reviewing, labeling Mr K as too sarcastic... Robert Moses, 1964 NY World Fair president, filed an open letter answer to "Variety" charge that Fair would have no amusements. They expect a big attraction at Amphitheatre and will welcome any clean amusements.

CON PHOENIX REPERTORY... Phoenix Theatre current season with its own repertory company left something to be desired, Coleman, Mirror, vetoed. Reviewer urges Phoenix to return to its original program of presenting plays that Broadway considers non-commercial, done with stars willing to work at minimum Equity wages in roles they cannot do on Broadway. Repertory systems are not for our times unless millionaires are available to soothe the growing pains with hefty checks.

Big Fish, Little Fish is a brilliant first play by a mystery writer turned playwright who knows how to place fascinating, fully developed "little people" in a stimulating situation and who also knows how to make his audience laugh and cry at the same time. The seven expert character actors involved have a perfect evening topping each other and still playing beautifully together under the ice-carved direction of John Gielgud.

Hamlet is an exciting, clearly stated version presented by an excellent young Phoenix Repertory cast and staged with the energy Stuart Vaughan used to put in the NY Shakespeare Festival outdoor productions. Donald Madden's portrayal of the title role is very convincing, while the entire cast joins in bringing fresh insight into the many-sided drama.

The Death of Bessie Smith is an exciting, frightening documentary-editorial pinpointing effectively the sickness of prejudice. The attack by talented Edward Albee is realistic, not avant garde, but always in the best dramatic traditions. As a companion piece to the clever, bitter satire on American materialism, *American Dream*, the twin bill shows diverse sides of the young playwright. Though everyone awaits Albee's full length play, he should not be rushed into doing something he is not ready for. As it stands he is the king of the modern one act play, American division.

Ladies Night in the Turkish Bath is a very bad, boring revival of a 1920 hit farce that certainly lost something in transition. Dirty jokes about various parts of the body were probably never funny, but played at break-neck speed by experienced comics it might be passable. Current try is more like a slow-boat to Union City, NJ, burlesque house.

First night critics who harshly panned *Ladies Night* will probably make a mistake if they think they have killed it off. Judging by the second night audience, three quarters filled with middle-aged males, the show is in for a long, profitable run. Disgusting but profitable.

Ford Foundation establishment of "Theatre Communication Group" is another wonderful example of the "Put Up or Shut Up" school of subsidy. Again the Ford staff has highlighted an acknowledged theatre problem and given a short term grant to try to start to solve it. Unless theatre leaders, from both the NY and college-community fields, agree to set up such an organization on a long-run basis, the Ford Foundation might well excuse itself from further theatre projects.

Trend Spotters Dept: Two former heavy-weight boxing champions are scheduled to "star" in forthcoming Broadway productions. In both cases their acting experience has been convined to TV and the ring.



OUTER
BROADWAY
THEATRE
LETTER

College Theatre

Figaro's Marriage, Jacques Barzun translation of Beaumarchais play presented at Carn. Inst of Tech, Pittsburgh, directed by Lawrence Carra. Anything Goes to be presented Apr 11, directed by Charles Werner Moore, Peter Hamilton guest choreographer ... J.B. to be presented Apr 19-22 at Brigham Young Univ, Provo, Utah.

Champlain Shakespeare Festival, presented by Univ of Vermont, Burlington, summer session to present Hamlet, Much Ado About Nothing, Henry V in repertory Aug 1-31, directed by Greg Falls, NY auditions for acting company Apr 3-5... Players, Inc, Catholic Univ graduate students troupe to spend 10th consecutive summer season at St Michael's College Playhouse, Winooski Park, Vt starting Jul 4.

Univ of Miami cast of Moliere's The Mischief Maker returned from five week USO-AETA tour of Newfoundland, Iceland, Greenland.

"First Stage" quarterly to be published by Purdue Univ, Lafayette, Ind Winter 1961, each issue with texts of three new plays.

Winter Repertory

The Balcony to be presented in Los Angeles by Al Ruddy... Company of Four to present Arthur Miller's An Enemy of the People at Stud-a-baker Theatre, Chicago.

AETA News

"Theatre and the Human Bond" is general theme of 1961 Silver Anniversary Convention of American Educational Theatre Association Aug 28-30, Waldorf Astoria, NYC. National Catholic Theatre Conference will also be held these same dates in NYC.

Rockefeller Foundation grant to AETA set up to invite a top Latin American director to work for six months with US college and community theatres, presenting a new Latin American play in area picked. Chairman of selection committee is Frank McMullan, Yale Univ... Mrs Ritva Heikkila, Finnish critic, is now touring 40 US colleges under AETA auspices.

Summer Playhouses

Salt Creek Playhouse, Hinesdale, Ill to be run by group of local residents, Tom Black producer ... Legion Star Playhouse, Ephrata, Pa. to open 16 week season Jun 8 with Marriage Go Round, John Cameron producer... St Louis Municipal Opera to open 43rd season with Calamity Jane.

Honey in the Rocks, a new outdoor drama by Kermit Hunter to be presented Jun 27-Sept 3 at Grandview State Park, Beckley, W. Virginia ... The San Jose Mission Story new outdoor drama by Ethel Wilson Harris-Dorothy Sinclair to be presented at San Jose Mission, Texas.

Road Tours

Brendan Behan, Impulse, arrested after fight with policeman and hotel detective in Toronto after an all-night drinking spree... Gypsy road tour opens Mar 29 in Rochester ... Two by Shaw, twin bill program of "The Great Catherine" and an edited "Captain Brassbound's Conversion" to open long pre-Broadway tour with Joan Fontaine and Paul Lucas next Sept 1962, Paul Gregory producer.

Shakespeare

Eric Berry, Douglas Watson, Betty Lou Holland to be featured in Twelfth Night student audience production at Stratford, Conn starting Apr 10.

London

Dazzling Prospect a new comedy by John Perry-M J Farrell to be staged by John Gielgud in May with Margaret Rutherford. In Aug he will appear in title role of Othello and in The Cherry Orchard at Stratford-on-Avon. Royal Shakespeare Theatre is new name of Stratford Memorial Theatre... Richard Burton, who will leave Camelot in Nov, to star in God and the Devil by Sartre at Aldwych. ... Norman Sherman organizing new "Transatlantic Players" troupe of US and Canadian actors.

Old Vic and Royal Shakespeare Theatre will get additional government funds instead of money going for establishment of British National Theatre. Local repertories will also get additional aid.

The Music Man with Van Johnson opened at Adelphi to firm audience approval and milder okays from press... The Sound of Music with Jean Bayless due May 18.

US Repertory

Two stops of American Theatre Guild Repertory Co cancelled. Cario because of United Arab Republic government objections to troupe playing at Tel Aviv, and Oslo due to mix-up of playing dates at available houses... Brussels' critics enjoyed three productions, though some did suggest Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth was naive and tended to preach ... Barbara Barrie may return to Madrid in Spanish language production of The Miracle Worker next year.

Paris

'Tis Pity She's a Whore adaptation of John Ford drama with film stars Alain Delon and Romy Schneider postponed due to illness of latter.

Europe

Tiny a new play by Ben Meyers won second annual play contest of Anglo American Theatre, Florence... West Side Story completed five week run of sellouts in Israel and sailed for Paris where it will play a month.

Africa

The King and I presented by an amateur cast at Nairobi City Players, Kenya was ten day sell-out. Directed by British actor Robert Beaumont.

Tryout Calendar

Carnival-Forrest, Philadelphia 3/27.

Current Road Tours

Five Finger Exercise-Geary San Francisco 3/13

Flower Drum Song- Shubert, Chicago, 11/14

Gypsy- Auditorium- Rochester 3/29

The Hostage- Civic, Chicago 2/20

Majority of One- National Washington 3/27

"CD" digests all theatre material in the 2100 pages of 7 NY daily papers of the preceding week. "CD" subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out-of-town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC.



